

# NIC Extends Outreach and Access with Technology

## LARGE JAIL NETWORK

members now have three new ways to obtain and share information using technologies based at the NIC Information Center. The three mechanisms include an Information Center web site, an updated LJN listserv, and a fax on demand system for ordering documents by telephone.

Together, these systems represent NIC's commitment to increasing agencies' access to current, relevant information that can help improve agency performance and advance correctional practice. Each system is new in 1998 and still has room for further development. We encourage LJN members to use each of these systems and let us know what you think, particularly if there are ways we can make them more useful.

## THE NEW WEB SITE FOR

the NIC Information Center was launched in April 1998. The site primarily offers access to NIC reports and publications, which will increasingly be available in portable document format (PDF) for viewing on-screen or for printing. A link for downloading Adobe Acrobat software to read PDF files is provided on the site.

Examples of material available from the site include:

- NIC publications, such as the new title, *Objective Jail Classification Systems: A Guide for Jail Administrators*;
- NIC Information Center research, such as the 1996 *Directory of Podular Direct Supervision Jails* and the 1997 report, *Fees Paid by Jail Inmates*; and
- Back issues of the *Large Jail Network Bulletin* from 1994 to the present.

The web site also provides links to other web-based sources of information. Additional pages describe Information Center research assistance services, the planned fee-for-service program, and special library collections such as the Correctional Training Network.

Visitors can search a database of materials produced by NIC or with NIC

funding and can order materials via email from the web site. All web services are available at no charge. Web browsers can reach the NIC Information Center home page at <http://www.nicic.org>.

LJN EXCHANGE, THE EMAIL listserv of the Large Jail Network, is now administered by the NIC Information Center in cooperation with the Jails Division. This private Internet mailing list is limited in membership to the sheriffs and designated jail administrators in each LJN agency. Members can access listserv email either from the Information Center web site or through their standard email interfaces.

The LJN Exchange will continue to provide a forum for the exchange of information and views on matters affecting jail administration. Participants can send one email message and have it received by all the members of the list. Those who would like to respond to a message can either respond to the entire listserv membership or address a single, separate reply to the original sender.

The new system will also provide additional features to improve member access and information sharing:

- Messages will be stored in an archive searchable from the web site interface, and accessible only by approved LJN Exchange list members. Both new and long-term listserv members will be able to

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review discussions that have already taken place on topics of interest. However, the archive will include only those messages posted after the transition to the new system in June 1998, not messages posted while the listserv was hosted by the Department of Justice.

- Archived messages can be viewed in various ways, e.g., in "threaded" discussion order for browsing in the same sequence as messages were originally exchanged.
- The system also enables participants to modify some aspects of how they receive listserv email. For example, a member could direct the system to batch his or her daily LJN email rather than sending it as individual messages. This feature can be useful when a listserv generates a lot of email and a participant would like to streamline his or her email reading.

Detailed guidelines for using the system are being provided to LJN members in paper copy and emailed to listserv participants. The guidelines will also be available from the Information Center web site.

The LJN Exchange now has 65 members at 47 agencies that operate jails and among NIC staff. While some agencies have two or more list participants, several jails and jail systems are not yet represented. If this is the case in your agency, we invite you to join the Exchange soon. LJN members can join via the Information Center web site's "NetConnections" section, which provides a link for entering the listserv at <http://www.nicic.org/lists.htm>. Or,

## TO ACCESS NIC INFORMATION-

- Visit the NIC Information Center home page at <http://www.nicic.org>.
- Send email to the LJN Exchange at the address, [ljn@www.nicic.org](mailto:ljn@www.nicic.org).
- Join the LJN Exchange by sending email to [request-ljn@www.nicic.org](mailto:request-ljn@www.nicic.org). Include the word "subscribe" in the body of the message.
- Call the fax on demand system at (303) 678-9049.

members can send an email message to [request-ljn@www.nicic.org](mailto:request-ljn@www.nicic.org) with "subscribe" in the body of the message.

NIC will be using the exchange to send announcements, publications, meeting agendas, etc., and to post questions for member response. Listserv participants can use the exchange to ask questions of their own, and get the answers they need more quickly than through other channels.

As more LJN members participate, you will help shape the evolution of the listserv and make it a vital networking tool. To send a message to the LJN Exchange, address your message to [ljn@www.nicic.org](mailto:ljn@www.nicic.org).

A FAX ON DEMAND SYSTEM has also been made available for correctional agencies and staff, particularly those who lack access to the

World Wide Web. Users can call into a menu system and select items to be faxed directly to them. Selections are identified by an S-digit number.

For start-up, the system has been configured to provide a few key items, such as the NIC Service Plan for Fiscal Year 1999, NIC's *Annotated Bibliography on Offender Job Training and Placement*; and the reports, *Fees Paid by Jail Inmates: Findings from the Nation's Largest Jails*, and *Privatization and Contracting in Corrections: Results of an NIC Survey*.

Users can select item 00000001 to receive a list of titles currently on the system, or can view the list from the Information Center web site. NIC's fax on demand system can be reached by dialing (303) 678-9049.

NIC and Information Center staff are eager to help agencies exchange information through these technologies. We hope LJN members will find them a valuable new tool and will not hesitate to share your ideas for taking advantage of the opportunities they offer. ■